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Behavior Detection in High-Rise Security

Michael Rozin | February 21, 2013

Commercial real estate companies have a long history of utilizing security systems and services to protect their buildings.

But for security programs to be able to protect a high-rise facility from manmade threats, they must be able to deter, detect, and prevent potential threat elements from carrying out acts of violence.

By its very nature – and by definition – security must be proactive. Surveillance cameras, access control systems, security guards, and biometrics sometimes aren't enough.



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From state law enforcement to in-house security and contract/guard force management companies, there is a live, dynamic movement across the United States to redesign existing security strategies.

This movement is an attempt to incorporate more effective, proactive security programs.

You can call it “behavior detection and assessment,” “behavior pattern recognition,” “security profiling,” or a variety of other terms. But what is it, and how can it benefit a high-rise facility?

Threat Defined

Two factors create manmade threats: means (weapons) and intent.

A person with access to weapons, but without malicious intent, isn’t a threat. Neither is the person with malicious intent, but no access to weapons (think of an inmate). It’s the combination of these factors that creates the threat.

When you think about the World Trade Center bombings, Columbine, or the shooting in the Aurora, CO, movie theater, you’ll notice that they happened at different locations, and were conducted by different perpetrators with different motives using different weaponry and attack methods. The only common element between acts of violence or manmade threats is intent.

Underlining Principle

People planning to commit violent acts – consciously or subconsciously – show indicators or “traces” that expose them to possible detection.

Traditional methods for attempting to discover aggressors’ plans, especially in the United States, have focused on detecting weapons. This focus has often been unsuccessful in detecting and preventing terrorists,

By stopping someone and asking them a series of simple

as illustrated by 9/11, Richard Reid (“shoe bomber”), and Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab (“underwear bomber”).

Focusing on intent vs. weapons is the groundwork of behavior detection, which enables trained personnel to identify behavioral traces that are consistent with dangerous objectives.

This focus enables a building’s security program to be more proactive by identifying suspicion indicators, which increases security operations’ ability to prevent acts of violence targeting their buildings.

But suspicious doesn’t necessarily mean guilty ... so what do you do?
You train your staff to pay attention and ask questions.

questions, such as, “How are you today?” or “Where are you headed?” or “Can I help you with anything?” a trained employee can cause the individual to stop long enough to allow the employee pick up on verbal and non-verbal cues often displayed in stressful situations.

Security interviewing is an effective method of asking questions in a polite, professional, and methodical manner. The verbal answers, along with interviewee’s nonverbal responses, allow staff to corroborate information and determine whether there is a threat possibility.

The questions asked by staff don’t have to be difficult or unusual. By stopping someone and asking them a series of simple questions, such as, “How are you today?” or “Where are you headed?” or “Can I help you with anything?” a trained employee can cause the individual to stop long enough to allow the employee to pick up on verbal and non-verbal cues often displayed in stressful situations.

Why Behavior Detection?

The reasons for implementing a behavior detection program at a high-rise facility can be categorized as operational, strategic, and financial.

From an operational standpoint, a behavior detection and assessment program can create an effective deterrence, allowing for detection of perpetrators and supporting the prevention of acts of violence ... which translates into financial savings.

Several institutions that have implemented these types of security programs have reduced monthly insurance premiums.

Insurance providers recognize that implementing these programs can significantly enhance the capability of the security department, and reduce the risk for manmade threats taking place at the insured environment.

Additionally, high-rise facilities that adopt effective security programs will enhance overall brand reputation.

Strategically, behavior detection programs create a dynamic, professional, and motivated security team.

It’s the core mission of any security entity to protect. When they’re trained in behavior detection, security officers and even non-security team members feel empowered and truly capable of identifying and intercepting perpetrators.

Over time, this investment can guarantee high levels of morale and job dedication.

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Michael Rozin

Michael Rozin, president of Rozin Security Consulting, served in the Israeli Defense Forces as a sergeant in a specialized combat unit. He also worked for the Israeli Airport Authority as a security agent. In the United States, Michael was employed by Mall of America as a special operations security captain to enhance counterterrorism capabilities. His innovative security programs are internationally recognized.

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Datawatch Systems will soon be installing a remotely-managed access control system for 222 Broadway in Lower Manhattan. The 32-story, 756,138-square-foot office building is owned by L&L Holdings. Components of the security installation include new turnstiles and an upgraded access control and CCTV system. The security upgrade is part of a major renovation to the building's [...]

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“Think about a LinkedIn or Shutterstock employee,” says Thomas Durels, executive vice president, chief of property operations and leasing for Empire State Realty Trust. “Those are our tenants; they’re working at the Empire State Building any time, day or night. They’re traveling to and from restaurants, a fitness center, conference space, and their workspaces – all under one roof. We’re contributing to their productivity by making sure they don’t have to wait in line for...”

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Leah Grout Garris



An award winning editor, Leah spent over eight years in senior editorial positions at both BUILDINGS magazine and ARCHI-TECH magazine. Her work has been incorporated into training and educational programs around the country. She is a graduate of University of Iowa. She is Editor at Large for High Rise Facilities.

Leah Grout Garris | October 6, 2014



[Chicago High-Rise Owner Turns Under-Used Top Floor Into 'Wow' Suite](#)

A classic Mies van der Rohe-style building, 401 North Michigan was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in the 1960s. Formerly known as the Equitable Building, the 35-story tower sits on the second largest plaza in Chicago. "Pioneer Court is second in size only to the Daley Plaza," says Eric Taylor, assistant vice president at Zeller Realty Group. "The building purposely has a large plaza area so it could be set back from the road." [...]

Leah Grout-Garris



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Leah Grout-Garris | August 27, 2014



[Changing Skylines: Tall Building Construction is on the Rise](#)

With everything the U.S. economy has endured in the last decade, who would have thought that the development and construction of high-rise towers in major cities would be on the rise? Despite the recession, the events of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the real estate market collapse, a recent report from the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) – Year in Review: Tall Trends of 2013 – says that high-rise construction is increasing again across the country. [...]

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Leah Grout Garris | July 16, 2014

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